

FAIR HOUSING NEWS

April 2004

Special points of interest:

- Outreach and Education
- Housing Statistics
- Director's Corner
- HR Commission

OUR MISSION

The Office of Human Rights ((OHR) seeks to eliminate discrimination, increase equal opportunity and protect human rights in the District of Columbia. To accomplish its mission, the Office enforces the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977 and other laws and policies on nondiscrimination. The office is the advocate for the practice of good human relations and mutual understanding among the racial, ethnic and religious groups in the District of Columbia. The OHR is charged with eradicating discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived: race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, physical handicap, source of income, and place of residence or business. The Department of Housing and Urban Development authorized OHR as a substantially equivalent agency for processing fair housing complaints following the completion of all program requirements. This is the fourth year of OHR's cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. OHR was awarded a capacity building grant in 2000 to develop a fair housing program. The first several years were dedicated to developing policies and procedures in accordance with HUD's Fair Housing Administrative Program



(FHAP) guidelines. In addition to our main office located at 441 4th Street N.W. the Housing Unit opened a second office located at 3220 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E (Penn Branch location). The satellite office is directly located in the community which provides another level of service to our constituents. Individuals can obtain fair housing information, meet with an Intake Officer and file a complaint. The Office conducted an open house for the community on June 30, 2003.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION



To increase awareness about the agency, OHR instituted several new outreach and education initiatives in FY03. Outreach events were provided for D.C. residents on “Knowing Your Fair Housing Rights”. OHR presented information on how to identify housing discrimination and provided resource materials on how to file a complaint. Targeted groups include civic associations, faith based organizations and tenants associations in various communities. OHR also participated in a D.C. government sponsored information fair for residents in the Benning Terrace Community on 10/18/03. In celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, OHR in collaboration with the D.C. Department of Housing & Urban Development and the Equal Rights Center sponsored the 2nd annual D.C.

Fair Housing Symposium “Cooperative Initiatives; Opportunities to Further Fair Housing for All. The event was held on April 23, 2003 at the Metro Center Marriott Hotel. Mayor Anthony Williams welcomed residents and presented the Equal Rights Center and the National Fair Housing Alliance with a proclamation honoring their commitment to fair housing. Avery Friedman, Chief Counsel to the Fair Housing Council of Northeast Ohio was the keynote speaker and presented information on fair housing issues. The event highlighted the importance of equal access and the impact of changing demographics in the community. The Equal Access Panel consisted of representatives from groups facing substantial challenges in the housing arena (i.e. disabled, transgender and Latino population) and the impact recent laws have had on their communities. The Changing Demographics Panel examined

demographic changes in the District of Columbia over the past 20 years, the racial divide and pattern changes and the location of affordable housing in relation to geographic movement of various ethnic groups within the city. In recognition of National Fair Housing Month, OHR will host the 3rd annual D.C. Fair Housing Symposium and a series of six workshops. The workshop series is designed for community residents and will specifically target the Asian (Vietnamese and Chinese), Latino, African American and Ethiopian Communities.

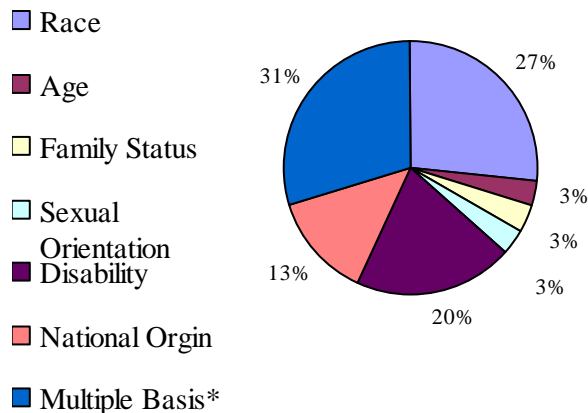


**Benning Terrace
Community Outreach**

FAIR HOUSING STATISTICS

Protected Class Basis Named in Complaints

January 2003 - December 2003

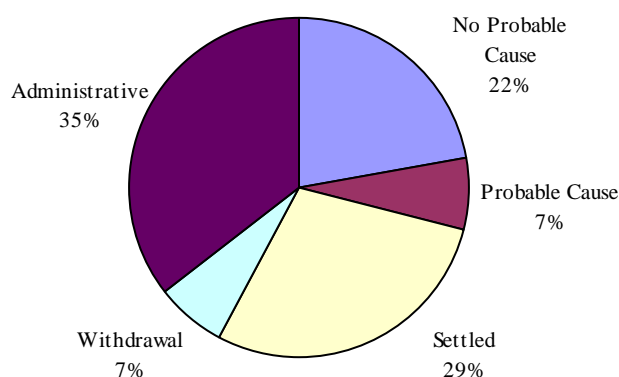


The Fair Housing Unit processed thirty (30) new cases from January 2003 to December 2003. The types of complaints filed during 2003 included (9) of the (16) protected categories. The protected categories were based on race, disability national origin, familial status, sex, sexual orientation, source of income, marital status and age. Statistical data demonstrate cases filed were based on race (27%) disability (20%) national origin (13%) familial status, sexual orientation and age (3%) are cases that represent one basis; moreover, an additional 31% of cases include multi-basis, cases that represent two or more basis.

OHR closed 45 cases from January through December 2003 and recovered \$37,000 in settlements for victims of housing discrimination. Types of closed cases consist of administrative (35%), withdrawal (7%), mediated (29%), no probable cause (22%) and probable cause (7%).

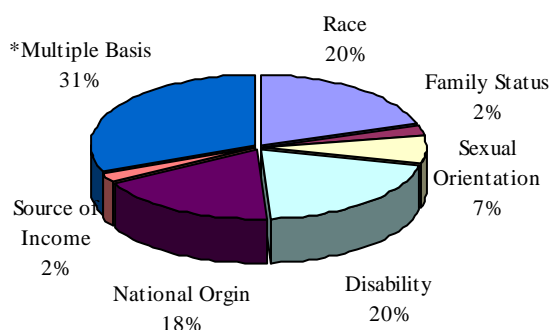
Outcome of Closed Cases

January 2003- December 2003



Cases Closed (Basis)

January 2003 - December 2003



Of the 45 cases closed (20%) were based on race, (20%) disability, (18%) national origin, (7%) sexual orientation, (2%) source of income and familial status which represent cases with one basis (31%) represent cases with multiple basis.

FAIR HOUSING STATISTICS cont'd

SETTLEMENTS

Settlements can occur at any time after a case is filed if both parties agree. This can occur if the mediation process was successful prior to a full investigation or can also occur during an investigation when both parties decide to reach an agreement.

PROBABLE CAUSE

A probable cause determination is made when the record reveals that there is substantial evidence to believe discrimination occurred. The Office of Human Rights will first attempt to conciliate the case and reach a settlement. If an agreement is not obtained, housing complainant's can elect to go to District Court or the D.C. Commission on Human Rights for a public hearing.

NO PROBABLE CAUSE

If a full investigation demonstrates that there is not sufficient evidence to reveal that the alleged discrimination occurred, the OHR will issue a no probable cause determination.

ADMINISTRATIVE CLOSURE

These include cases where the Complainant voluntarily withdraws a case, the Complainant fails to cooperate with the OHR in providing information during the investigation or the Complainant could not be located.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

In addition to adjudicating discrimination complaints, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) conduct community outreach programs. The HRC and the Mayor's Office celebrated Human Rights Day on December 10, 2003 with a panel discussion that included representatives of various communities in the District. Each panelist addressed how their communities progressed under the D.C. Human Right Act and what work is left to be done. Panel participants included Joan Kuransky of Wilder Opportunities For Women, Craig Howell of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance, Robert Raben of the D.C. Hispanic Bar Association and E. Ned Solon of the D.C. Branch of the NAACP. Topics included housing discrimination, pay equity, language access and homelessness.

FAIR HOUSING OUTREACH EVENTS





DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Kenneth L. Saunders currently serves as the Director for the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights. Mr. Saunders was appointed by Mayor Anthony Williams in June 2003. Previously, Mr. Saunders served as Executive Director of the Greater Shreveport Human Relations Commission. The Commission was established to assist and consult with the city of Shreveport and its elected and appointed officials on matters involving prejudice and/or discrimination. The Commission educates the community on issues of cultural diversity, identifying and resolving community issues, and working to eliminate discrimination in all forms in greater Shreveport. Mr. Saunders also worked at the Community Relations Commission in Columbus, Ohio from 1998 to 2001. His efforts were instrumental in establishing a Hate Crimes Task Force, a Task Force on Predatory Lending, a Chamber of Commerce Guide to Religious Accommodations in the Workplace, and a Commission Mediation Program for small to medium size businesses. During his tenure at the Community Relations Commission, Mr. Saunders acted as the Commission's EEO Officer and legal counsel. Prior to his work with the Community Relations Commission, Mr. Saunders practiced law with the firm of Saunders, Jackson & Hines, where he was the managing partner, and with the international law firm of Baker & Hostetler. Mr. Saunders is a graduate of Wilberforce University and received his juris doctorate degree from the Ohio State University College of Law.

SUCCESS STORIES

Complainant alleged a housing provider failed to provide a reasonable accommodation request. The Complainant's disability was exacerbated by the poor ventilation and pest infestation in the unit. The Respondent took immediate action and moved the Complainant to a new unit to accommodate the individual's disability.

Complainant alleged a housing provider failed to provide a reasonable accommodation request, the housing provider attempted to evict the tenant when the tenant exercised their fair housing rights. The case was successfully mediated by OHR within 48 hours and the Respondent rescinded the eviction notice and agreed to provide equipment to assist with the tenant's disability. The DCHRA and the FHA prohibits refusal to make a reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in rules, policies practices or services.

Complainant alleged a housing provider threatened to report Complainant's immigration status for participating in organizing a tenant's association. OHR investigated the allegations and issued a probable cause finding for discriminating based on national origin. The FHA and DCHRA prohibits interfering, coercing or intimidating an individual for exercising their fair housing rights based on any of the protected categories.